

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A computer implemented method for regulating a level of self-disclosure in an instant messaging communications session, the method comprising:

5       enabling user selection on a first instant messaging participant system of an instant messaging communications mode from among at least a first available mode and a second available mode, the first available mode disclosing a different amount of information about a first instant messaging participant than the second available mode;

10      enabling creation of a message clip on the first instant messaging participant system according to the selected communications mode; and

      enabling delivery of the message clip from the first instant messaging participant system to a second instant messaging participant system.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising storing the message clip on a host system.

15      3. The method of claim 2 wherein enabling delivery comprises enabling delivery of the message clip from the host system to the second instant messaging participant system.

20      4. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

      selecting the first available mode;  
      creating a first message clip on the first instant messaging participant system according to the first available mode; and  
      delivering the first message clip from the first instant messaging participant system to the second instant messaging participant system.

25      5. The method of claim 4 further comprising:

      selecting the second available mode;  
      creating a second message clip on the first instant messaging participant system according to the second available mode; and

delivering the second message clip from the first instant messaging participant system to the second instant messaging participant system.

6. A computer implemented method for regulating a level of self-disclosure in an instant messaging communications session, the method comprising:

5 rendering, on a first instant messaging participant system, an instant messaging application user interface for an instant messaging communications session involving at least a first instant messaging participant and a second instant messaging participant;

10 enabling user selection on the first instant messaging participant system of an instant messaging communications mode from among at least a first available mode and a second available mode, the first available mode disclosing a different amount of information about the first instant messaging participant than the second available mode, the user selection being enabled at least in part through display of the available modes at the instant messaging application user interface;

15 enabling creation of a message clip on the first instant messaging participant system according to the selected communications mode, the message clip being created at least in part through user interaction with the instant messaging application user interface; and

20 enabling delivery of the message clip from the first instant messaging participant system to a second instant messaging participant system in response to a user interaction with the instant messaging application user interface.

7. The method of claim 6 in which enabling user selection comprises enabling user selection of at least one of a text communications mode, an audio communications mode, a still photograph communications mode and a video communications mode.

25 8. The method of claim 6 in which enabling creation of a message clip comprises enabling selection of a pre-stored message clip.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein the pre-stored message clip is stored on a host system.

10. The method of claim 6 further comprising:  
selecting the first available mode;  
creating a first message clip on the first instant messaging participant system  
according to the first available mode; and  
5 delivering the first message clip from the first instant messaging participant system to  
the second instant messaging participant system.

11. The method of claim 10 further comprising:  
selecting the second available mode;  
10 creating a second message clip on the first instant messaging participant system  
according to the second available mode; and  
delivering the second message clip from the first instant messaging participant system  
to the second instant messaging participant system.

15 12. A computer program, stored on a computer readable medium, the computer  
program comprising instructions for:  
enabling user selection on a first instant messaging participant system of an instant  
messaging communications mode from among at least a first available mode and a second  
available mode, the first available mode disclosing a different amount of information about a  
20 first instant messaging participant than the second available mode;  
enabling creation of a message clip on the first instant messaging participant system  
according to the selected communications mode; and  
enabling delivery of the message clip from the first instant messaging participant  
system to a second instant messaging participant system.

25 13. The computer program of claim 12 further comprising instructions for storing the  
message clip on a host system.

30 14. The computer program of claim 13 wherein instructions for enabling delivery  
comprises instructions for enabling delivery of the message clip from the host system to the  
second instant messaging participant system.

15. The computer program of claim 12 further comprising instructions for:  
selecting the first available mode;  
creating a first message clip on the first instant messaging participant system  
according to the first available mode; and  
delivering the first message clip from the first instant messaging participant system to  
the second instant messaging participant system.

10 16. The computer program of claim 15 further comprising instructions for:  
selecting the second available mode;  
creating a second message clip on the first instant messaging participant system  
according to the second available mode; and  
delivering the second message clip from the first instant messaging participant system  
to the second instant messaging participant system.

15 17. A computer program, stored on a computer readable medium, the computer  
program comprising instructions for:

20 rendering, on a first instant messaging participant system, an instant messaging  
application user interface for an instant messaging communications session involving at least  
a first instant messaging participant and a second instant messaging participant;

25 enabling user selection on the first instant messaging participant system of an instant  
messaging communications mode from among at least a first available mode and a second  
available mode, the first available mode disclosing a different amount of information about  
the first instant messaging participant than the second available mode, the user selection  
being enabled at least in part through display of the available modes at the instant messaging  
application user interface;

enabling creation of a message clip on the first instant messaging participant system  
according to the selected communications mode, the message clip being created at least in  
part through user interaction with the instant messaging application user interface; and

enabling delivery of the message clip from the first instant messaging participant system to a second instant messaging participant system in response to a user interaction with the instant messaging application user interface.

5           18. The computer program of claim 17 in which instructions for enabling user selection comprises instructions for enabling user selection of at least one of a text communications mode, an audio communications mode, a still photograph communications mode and a video communications mode.

10           19. The computer program of claim 17 in which instructions for enabling creation of a message clip comprises instructions for enabling selection of a pre-stored message clip.

20. The computer program of claim 19 wherein the message clip is stored on a host system.

15           21. The computer program of claim 17 further comprising instructions for:  
selecting the first available mode;  
creating a first message clip on the first instant messaging participant system according to the first available mode; and  
20           delivering the first message clip from the first instant messaging participant system to the second instant messaging participant system.

25           22. The computer program of claim 21 further comprising instructions for:  
selecting the second available mode;  
creating a second message clip on the first instant messaging participant system according to the second available mode; and  
delivering the second message clip from the first instant messaging participant system to the second instant messaging participant system.